Depot Town Rag

Volume 18, Number 10 "All the news in one block in one month."

October 1995

100% FREE Rag Content

- Reunion plans
- *Holiday House*
- Duke Ellington & Co.
- New officers take over
- Back to (the) Normal

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. P.O. Box 970-235, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197-0804

New merchandising pattern apparent

The most noticable new pattern of business growth in Ypsilanti's depot district a generation ago was the proliferation of tiny shops. Today those shops are getting bigger.

The Old Town Restaurant (Cady's) and Aubree's Saloon led the way when they each expanded - one to the east and west, the other upstairs and outside. That seemed to start the new pattern. Miller's Ice Cream Parlor opened an elegant back room and added breakfasts and lunches to their line of ice cream and gift items.

Esquire Custom Drapery & Blinds knocked out walls into the shops next door and added wallpaper and carpeting to their enterprise. Sidetrack added an elegant patio and has more plans for the future. Then Remington-Walker Design Assocaiates moved to larger quarters and proceeded to expand beyond that. Depot Doo doubled their sales and service space by usurping the adjacent property. Designs on You remodeled and expanded sales space, as well.

Richard Reid's Hair Station is doubling its space while Me 'N' My Sister's Country Store will add even more sales and exhibit space in their quaint shop.

In a twenty-year period, Depot Town shops have proven their viability and progressed into a new era. Where forty tiny shops used to hold forth, today's number grows in size and shrinks in total number. In another twenty years we may see suburbs expanding past the district's boundaries.

Any haunted houses in the Historic District?

Most avid remodelers in the district report a feeling of disappointment at not having found many manifestations of monsters, ghosts, or haunts in the buildings they've been restoring these past two decades. With all the exciting lives that have been lived in this old district, they hoped there would be at least some indications or traces left over to haunt the new-comers. Very few have been noted.

A previous owner of the Follett House, Jerry Meadows, used to tell of the poltergeist-like apparition that appeared in his third floor ballroom late at night. "He must have been looking for that old army jacket I had found," said The Perfesser, referring to the holey coat found hidden between the wall boards.

Another popular local legend has its home in the Gilbert Mansion over on Grove Street. Many kids who've camped out on the floor of the earlier Boys and Girls Club tell stories of some 'spirit' that moves things around in the dark and seems discontented when people stay all night. So far, none of the tenants in the swanky rehabbed apartments have noticed anything, though. Maybe the 'spirit' couldn't afford the new rent?

Depot district welcomes the goblins again

Parading up and down the sidewalks, hiding in the alleys, screaming up the steps to the Freighthouse . . . hundreds of pirates and princesses are expected to descend upon the City's annual Hallowe'en bash at the Freighthouse on Thursday, October 26.

Carnival games, a costume parade, magic show, and a dance for three- to twelve-year-olds will highlight the program at the Freighthouse with admission set at one dollar per child.

Here's the schedule for Thursday, October 26:

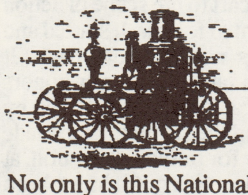
5-7:00 P.M. Carnival Games in the Freighthouse

7:00 P.M. Magician

7:15 P.M. Parade of Costumes throughout the district

7:30-8:30 Hallowe'en Ball for kids.

Parents, photographers, and other adults get in free, of course~



'Hot times' in this old town

Not only is this National Fire Prevention Month, but it's the month when Ypsilanti celebrates its Fire Department's one-hundredth anniversary and many readers have suggested the Heritage Festival edition of *The Rag* should be seen as a 'lead-in' to this coincidence. Even with the Neptune Fire Company housed in the Thompson Block, there were plenty of fires in the original wood frame buildings that gathered at the rail head.

With only three more months before it goes out of business, this issue hurries to tell the story of our original buildings and what happened to them to make way for the present brick edifices which replaced them. Page five begins the research dug up by James Thomas Mann and the epic tale of 'fire and conflagration at the depot' continues on page two.

Join the Ypsilanti Fire Department events in Riverside Park on Saturday, October 7, when seventeen departments and historic fire engines from Greenfield Village gather (on the date of The Great Chicago Fire!) to commemorate our own deparatment's gala one hundredth anniversary.

City of Ypsilanti Fire Department

100-Year

Centennial Celebration

Saturday, October 7, 1995

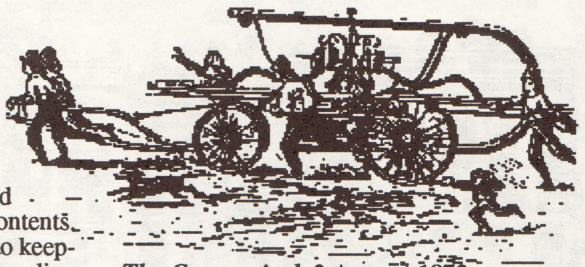
Noon - 5 P.M.

Ypsilanti's Riverside Park

Bring the family to see many exciting displays of new & antique fire apparatus with demonstrations by the Washtenaw County Area Fire Mutual Aid Association, including demonstrations of the 'Jaws of Life' and the educational 'Smoke House.'

More fires at the depot!

- compiled by James Thomas Mann



***Ypsilanti Commercial*, 6 January 1888**

- The boarding houe on the east side, near the railroad track, known as the East Side Hotel, was damaged by fire last Monday morning, to the amount of about $1,000. Insured for $800. The furniture was saved. The fire company deserves to be complimented for the service done at this fire.

***Ypsilanti Commercial*, 5 May 1893**

- At about ten o'clock Sunday night the fire alarm was rung. The cause was a small blaze in E. Rexford's & Son's coal sheds on the Michigan Central track near Park street. It was extinguished before much damage was done. The fire was discovered by the engineer of a passing train, and the roar of a steam whistle added to the clang of bells was enough to frighten the oldest inhabitant.

***Ypsilanti Commercial*, 19 May 1893**

Probably incendiary

The brick warehouse belonging to the Ypsilanti Paper Company, near the Michigan Central track, and used for storage purposes, burned early last Sunday moring. Loss about $4,000, partially insured. The fire was undoubtedly of incendiary origin.

Ypsilanti Commerical, 15 November 1895

- The barns and and mining shed owned by A.S. Yost and situated near the Michigan Central track on Lincoln street were destroyed by fire at about 1 o'clock Monday night. James Geraghty, a butcher, had six horses in the barn, and they were all burned. He had $600 insurance on horses, hay, wagons, etc., and this will nearly cover his loss. L.P. Dickinson's axe handle warehouse, contained a large lot of manufactured goods and those in process of manufacture, was also entirely destroyed. Mr. Dickinson's loss, on which he had no insurace, is about $2,000. Morse, the Boston poultry buyer, occupied the sheds that were burned, as a place in which to kill and dress poultry. Some 500 live turkeys and half as many chickens were confined there. The doors were thrown open during the fire and this poultry all liberated, and any forth warder was a poor man indeed who didn't find a Thanksgiving turkey on his front doorstep the next morning. These turkeys were strangers and evidently several of them were "taken in," for Mr. Morse reports that he has discovered that 100 of them he cannot discover. Mr. Morse carried no insurance. The origin of the fire is a mystery.

***Ypsilanti Commercial*, 12 August 1897**

A midnight fire

• Barn and contents destroyed by fire early Saturday morning

• Live stock perish

A barn owned by Mrs. George, situated near the Michigan Central green house, in a short street back of the depot, was discovered to be on fire shortly after midnight, Friday. An alarm was turned in, and when the department arrived on the scene the fire had gained such headway that it was found impossible to save either the barn or contents. The fire laddies devoted their efforts to keeping the fire in check, and prevent it spreading to adjacent property. There was a horse, three cows and calf in the barn when the fire was discovered. One cow and the calf were saved, but owing to the density of the smoke caused by the burning hay, it was impossible to get the rest of the stock out, and it perished in the flames.

The north end of the barn was used as a refrigerator by Fred Forbes for the storage of dressed meats. This part of the building was not entirely burned, but the smoke, heat and water, soon rendered it contents worthless...

***Ypsilanti Daily Press*, 30 December 1907**

Oliver House damaged by fire Fire Department receives a hurry-up call to E. Cross Street Damage slight

About 8 o'clock this morning, the fire deparment received a call to the Oliver house, on East Cross street, a saloon belonging to Westfall. The roof, at the rear of the building, had caught fire from an overheated stove pipe projecting through it. It had been smouldering some time before discovered.

The department were quickly, upon the scene, and put out the fire with little difficulty. A large hole was burned in the roof, the damage amounting to about $15. The loss is covered by insurance. (Aubree's Saloon)

***Ypsilanti Daily Press*, 28 May 1910**

M.C. depot Burned

• Fire breaks out this morning and effects much damage

• Blaze has good start before it is discovered

• Roof is burned and big loss is effected inside by water

Fire was discovered in the roof of the M.C. depot this morning about 10 o'clock. The blaze had evidently been smouldering for some time and when it was finally discovered had gained a good start. The cause is not known but it is thought to have been either poorly insulated wires or a heated chimney.

The first sign of the fire was smoke seen rolling up from the roof. Alarm was quickly sounded an the fire department responded as soon as possible. Effective fighting was rendered difficult on account of the location and about as much damage was done by the water that came through ito the depot as by the fire. Several holes were made in the roof and the rafters and wooden supports wre almost completely destroyed.

It as about two hours before the fire was extinguished and the building is in such condition this afternoon that an accurate estimate of the loss is impossible.

***The Commerical*, 2 August 1873**

We, the undersigned, agree to pay the sum of one thousand (1000) dollars towards the cost of a good new second or third class Steam Fire Engine, to be owned by the city of Ypsilanti. *Provided*, Such steamer shall be housed and kept in order for use, south of Congress Street in said city, when not in use in subduing fires.

Very respectfully yours, etc.,
CORNWELLS & CO.

***Ypsilanti Commercial*, 17 February 1877**

An old landmark gone

In 1842 the sawmill, the only one in the city, was built and in the winter of 1842-3 it was stocked. Mark Norris and Benjamin Follett build and owned it for many years. Alderman Joseph Follmor has superintended the mill from the beginning, now 35 years. Here, night and day he has toiled and planned. He was as throughly identified with it as though born and housed all his life long under its roof. He had formed an attachment for the old mill as close as could possibly exist between a human sould and an inanimate object. What must have been his feelings when Tuesday morning he saw the building in which and around which he had spent so many hours of the last years of his life, being consumed by the fire fiend. At about halfpast six our son came in to the house, saying, "Father, there is more smoke issuing from the sawmill than would seem natrual for an ordinary fire." Stepping to the door, sure enough a volume of rarified smoke was creeping from the roof of the west end. He ran over and gave the alarm. He reached the building in time to enter it, but had to beat a speedy retreat. The west end was a sheet of fire, and in less than two minutes the entire building, roof and all, was shrouded in flame. We never saw a buiding go more instantaneously. Alarming the railroad folks he hastened to summon the fire engine, the R.R. engine had already roused the man who had charge. Several started with the hose cart to the scene of action expecting the elephant to follow. It started and then deciding it was no use went back. It finally came, gut too late. Whatever honors were won on this occasion will be clamed by the little Nepture. Had the steam engine made haste, and been ready for immediate action, at leaat $1,000 in property could have been saved. The entire foundation and frame work would have been left complete, and in a very few days the mill would have been at work. As it now the owners, Doubel Bros., will have to build the mill entrely new, and this they propose to do. The afternoon of the same day they began the work. Aldermen Follmor and Scovill had rented the mill for a term of years. The loss is not far from $3,000. No insurance.

(On the site of Heritage Square - Depot Town Counseling, Me 'N' My Sisters, The Teachers Shop).

Dateline: Depot Town

A Neighborhood Forgotten by Time (and Life and Newsweek)

Reunion set for spring

Emma Hall was 'that lady with the little dogs' and lived at the corner of Cross and Ninde (where Depot Town Travel is today) for the many years she helped out at the Old Town Restaurant. Back in the Sixties, when her husband was still alive, he used to put his old wooden straight chair out on the corner by their front door and direct traffic at that busy intersection. Some of today's 'regulars' were among the kids Mr. Hall used to shoo out of the street.

Those kids are getting together again this spring and they invite all the 'old gang' of folks who called themselves 'Depot Towners' to join them in a happy celebration of a community that has hung on to neighborly tradition for well more than one hundred and seventy years now - with no sign of letting up.

Sidetrack's Linda French began the concept several months ago and found much interest and many names among today's regulars on the block. News articles have brought countless responses and Linda encourages photos, clippings, and stories of The Old Days for what now looks like a spring event in Depot Town. Stop in at the Sidetrack for an update!

It's not snake beer

Following the raves of Sidetrack's introduction of Frog Island Brewing Company's Stewart's Ale, readers have announced loud and clear that the new brew is definitely not "named for a reptile," as reported here.

"Frog aren't reptiles," they point out correctly, and the excellent new potable is certainly worthy of a nobler designation. "Amphibians" is what frogs are, beer-related or not.

Some report they're waiting for the Ale to come out in bottled form, perhaps so they can take it on fishing trips or cruises and live up to the "amphibian" nature of its nomenclature.

'Normal School' to stop here

EMU Family Day will see busloads of parents brought to Depot Town for short tours on Saturday, October 7. Break out the Green & White for your window displays and let them know that their sons and daughters are once more safe in the depot district as they find their ways to the campus at the Old Normal School. David French, incoming president of the Depot Town Association, will be the step-on guide as the buses arrive that day.

New colors in mid-block

Dusty rose and celery green of two shades, each, began to appear on the front facade of Depot Doo just in time for Heritage Festival and the warm and inviting color scheme reached completion soon after. Watch for a complementary color to appear in an awning soon, too, say the landlords.

First car show was a hit

Hundreds of antique autos and customized street rods turned out for what was billed as the "first annual" such event on September 17 in Riverside Park. Jim Roberts, Jack Miller and other local afficianadoes of automobilia drew in their chips on this event and brought out some of the most gorgeous examples from friends' and associates' garaged collections.

It was a bright and brisk Sunday and the paint and chrome sparkled from clear across the Huron River. Many were surprised to see how many of their neighbors obviously spend every single minute of their spare time taking care of the beauties

Holiday House at the James Breakey Manor

The Holidays are just around the corner and before you know it, it'll be time to begin your holiday decorating and entertaining! But don't panic, because help is on the way! Get a head start on your holiday plans with a visit to the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation's Holiday House at the James Breakey Manor October 21 and 22.

A brand new fundraising event for the Heritage Foundation, the Holiday House will feature the area's most creative designers and decorators presenting some of the best and brightest ideas for the holidays. They'll transform the Breakey Manor into a holiday wonderland with their designs for tabletops, mantels, staircases and even entire rooms.

Among those participating will be Remington-Walker Design Associates, The Parish House Inn, Me 'N' My Sisters Country Store, Treasures Boutique and Designs on You, Miller's Ice Cream Parlor & Emporium, Design Consultant Warren Kent Lewis, and others, including members of the Heritage Foundation. A special added attraction will be a display of antique hats and fans from the Grace Cornish Collection.

Visitors to the Holiday House will enjoy light refreshments, served by the Breakey Manor, and can also include a walking tour (building exteriors only) of the surrounding National Register Historic District, as part of their visit. Maps will be available for self-guided tours, or visitors can join one of the guided tours given by members of the Heritage Foundation.

The Holiday House is open from 10:090 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 21 and from 12:00 noon to 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 22. The guided tours will be held on Saturday at 12 noon, 2 and 4 P.M. and on Sunday at 1 and 3 P.M. Tickets are available at the door. Admission is $8 per person and includes the tour of the displays and the Breakey Manor, refreshments, and the optional walking tour. The James Breakey Manor, a landmark Greek Revival Style mansion built c.1834-1840, is located at 125 N. Huron Street, Ypsilanti.

For more information, call the James Breakey Manor at (313) 483-2300.

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Holiday House
James Breakey Manor
Saturday & Sunday
October 21 & 22

Eastern Michigan University

Depot Town Center

Lifespan Learning Programs

Duke Ellington and the Evolution of Jazz

Each Session 6:30-8:30 P.M.
(Six Wednesdays)

10/4	Beginnings & the Influence of New Orleans
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10/18	The Swing Era
10/25	The Creative '40s
11/1	Renewal in the '50s
11/8	Final Achievements

WEMU Jazz Talk - FREE!

Each Session 4-6P.M.
(5 Sundays:
10/22, 11/5, 11/19, 12/3 and 12/17)

Jazz Talk is an open-ended, free-wheeling Sunday afternoon discussion of jazz featuring WEMU's on-the-air jazz experts. Feel free to bring your own records, tapes, CDs and, of course, stories, insight and questions.

World War II Series

The World in the Balance: the War in Europe

October 19 & 26 and November 2 & 9
(4 Thursdays - 6:30-8:30 P.M.

10/19	Germany Triumphant
10/26	The Turning of the tide
11/2	Victory in Europe
11/9	Why We Fight

Call 487-6815 or 487-0407; ask for Lifespan Learning.

Depot Town Association, Inc.

DTA elects:

At its annual election meeting on September 21, the Depot Town Association, Inc. elected the following officers for their 1995-6 year of activity:

- **President - David French,** Sidetrack.
- **President elect - Sandy Hoag,** Remington-Walker Design Associates.
- **Secretary - Judy Julie,** Renewed Interest Antiques.
- **Treasurer - Carole Clare,** Ypsilanti City Assessor and president Washtenaw County Assessor's Association.

Special thanks to past-president Tommy Steele, and to past-treasurer, Gwen Blackmer for their expertise and talents as they served the district's neighborhood association.

Presented at the September DTA meeting:

A Bad Poem to a Good Friend

- B.R. Fine, 1995

We're not very happy,
not happy at all --
It's sad to say good-by
to our dear friend Paul,
He's closed down his shop
and locked up the door.
We'll hardly get to see him
around here any more.
Paul's been a fixture in our neighborhood;
You could always tell he was
up to something good.
Hanging from the roof tops,
stringing the holiday lights,
Wielding a gavel at meetings
and refereeing fights.
Paul could be counted on to do
'most anything --
Why, one fine summer,
he served as hobo king!
We weep for all the pictures that
won't know Paul's framing skill.
H'e'd do his art to art and then,
submit a modest bill.
No more River Artworks?
Oh, rue the sorry day!
The art just doesn't look as good
since Paul's gone away.
Is there life after Depot Town?
Only heaven knows,
But Paul will live inside our hearts,
no matter where he goes.

DTA 21 September 1995

- **Minutes of August** approved as published.
- **Treasury** report approved. Gwen Blackmer also provided an updated list of paid memberships.
- **DDA:** Kevin Walker spoke to DTA concerning electrifying poles in Depot Town. Because DDA is a public-funded group, DTA will apply for Edison grant. The applied-for grant will request monies to electrify poles and also to purchase Christmas decorations for the poles. Kevin and Carolyn McKeever will continue work on this.

Special Events:

- **Hot Rod show** for Riverside Park in the spring was discussed. The group would like to hold Saturday night kick-off at the Freighhouse and then the exhibition on Sunday in the park. They would like DTA to sponsor event and pay for port-a-johns and insurance. Linda French, Dave Blackmer, and Jack Miller will speak with Hot Rod group and also with VCB. Committee will report back at October meeting.
- **Homecoming Parade** for EMU to take place 23 September. Parade to start at River and Cross and proceed down Cross Street to Campus. Business owners or their employees to wear EMU Emotion T-shirts on Saturday. Depot Town businesses will be advertised on scoreboard at Homecoming game.
- **EMU Family Day** is planned for 7 October. It is expected that approximately 10,000 people will participate in events to include bus tour of Depot Town, Downtown, and other local areas. Other events on 7 October include Christmas kick-off at both Me 'N' My Sisters and Remington-Walker, 100th Anniversary of Ypsilanti Fire Department at Riverside Park (with some trucks on loan from Greenfield Village), and the Farmers' Market Fall Fair which will include silent auction.
- **Depot Town Reunion** is causing a lot of interested people to contact Linda French. Reunion is slotted to happen sometime in spring to give the snowbirds time to 'fly' back north. In the meantime, requests have been made for photos and stories. You can drop these off with Linda French at the Sidetrack.
- **Frog Island Program** reports that $1875.00 collected from program from Jazz. When outstanding bills are collected the total will come to $2295.00.
- **Farmer's Market** reports new area for posting upcoming events plus "Farmers' Market" Collectibles. This area will be on the west side of the building behind the coffee shop.
- **Rag Report** included a listing of upcoming October articles.

Unfinished Business:

- **Pamphlet** for Depot Town businesses shelved until October.
- **Bylaws committee** to report in October.
- **Streetscape** shelved until October.

New Business:

- **Election of Officers:** Richard Reid and Gary McKeever withdrew nomination from president-elect position and Sandy Hoag's name was added. Tom Steele read Bylaws concerning voting privileges. After voting and tabulation the new officers are Dave French president, Sandy Hoag president-elect, Judy Julie secretary, Carole Clare treasurer. Congratulations on your new posts and a special thank you to Tom Steele and Gwen Blackmer for their hard work.
- **Announcements:**

Recognition for Paul Fetters for all his time spent in Depot Town - DTA presented him with a plaque and Bonni wrote a poem to him.

Next meeting to be held 19 October 1995 at 6 P.M. at Renewed Interest Antiques.

- **Best Yet award** goes to all the past officers for all their hard work: Thanks to Tom Steele, Dave French, Judy Julie, and Gwen Blackmer.
- **Golden Goose** goes to the individual(s) who stole Cady's "beer guy!"

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate. -Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
David French, president
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Fire and Conflagration at the depot!

A condensed history of what was here before the brick buildings - and where they went:

Michigan Argus, 3 February 1860

Fire at Ypsilanti Loss $11,000 - Insurance $2,225

About 11 o'clock, A.M., on Monday last, a fire broke out in the Daguerreian Gallery of A.J. Clark, on the South side of Cross Street, Ypsilanti, which resulted in the destruction of six wooden buildings.

The building in which the fire originated was owned by B. Follett, loss $2,500 - no insurance...

Above it was occupied by the *Herald* Printing Office. One small Press and a part of the material saved. Loss $800, insured $625. The *Herald* office was owned by B. Follett, and the paper was published by S.B. Mc Cracken. It is to be in "running order" again soon.

Adjoining this building was the Store of A.G. Moulson. Loss of Mr. M. on building $1,200; on goods $200. Insured $400.

A.H. Smith owned half of next building, and had no insurance. Loss on building $600, and on goods $1000. The other half of building owned by S. Kilpatrick, loss $600 — no insurance.

The old National Hotel building, now occupied by the Normal School, the dwelling of B. Follett, and other buildings in the vicinity were in great danger, and were at times on fire.

We visited Ypsilanti Tuesday morning, and are indebted to B. Follett, Esq., for the above facts and figures.

During the progress of the fire, and when its wider spread was feared, Mayor Barry was telegraphed for aid; the fire alarm was sounded, and the two engines in the City and one in the Village were hurried to the depot. The fire being subdued, however, the call was contermanded with thanks for the promptness of our firemen to respond to the call, and with offers of assistance which we hope may not soon be needed.

(From the site of the Sidetrack to Hon's)

Ypsilanti Commercial, 12 May 1877

- The barn and sheds belonging to Mr. Gilbert were consumed Tuesday. It is an exceedingly dry time and simply a spark from a passing train did the work. The loss is reported to be $1,000, with no insurance. Cackling geese saved Rome. The Ladies' temperance meeting, being in session at Fireman's hall, they first discovered the fire, rung the bell and thus the machine shops and surrounding buildings were saved. Why not constitute the lady who rung the bell an honorary member of the company?

Ypsilanti Commercial, 2 June 1877

- Quite a little excitement was occasioned yesterday, during the noon hour, by the cry of "fire." The huge wood-pile at the depot, it was soon discovered, had ignited by means of sparks from a locomotive. The little "Neptune" did effective work. . .

Ypsilanti Commercial, 5 January 1878

The Fire

Where? At the Depot this time

How originated? In the drug store of Mr. Grossman; but how or in what manner we cannot just tell.

The Alarm - The railroad watchman discoved it first, breaking out of the drug store. The engine standing on the track tooted loud and long, but it was generally supposed to be a call to the hands or a warning to another train. the first was first discovered about half-past two A.M., but it was three o'clock before a general alarm was given. It was a wonderfully quiet fire. Not near half the population of the city were aware of the catastrophe until next morning. When we reached the fire, at half-past three, the block as far as the Farmers' Store was entrapped in flames, and the Farmers' Store was smoking prodigiously. Very soon this and Davis & Shire's were going, and in less than thirty minutes the roofs tumbled in. The front wall of the latter was pulled down by the firemen. The little Neptune, in its disabled condition, was doing what it could; and the steamer was working efficiently.

How arrested - The water from the cistern having been exhausted, the steamer was removed to the river. It sent vast volumes of water upon Davis & Shire's and McRoberts'. The double wall here had given a temporary check to the fire. At Mayor Barnes' direction, the floors near the wall (already ignited) were torn up and saturated with water on the inside. Thus the mad flames were staid, and the excited spectators breathed easier for as if by a hair's breath McRoberts' was saved, and so the Follett House, Duebel's mill and the whole Depot preserved from general destruction. The steamer saved Masonic block and the wooden buildings on the south side of the street. They were repeatedly on fire. The glass snapped and cracked by the intense heat. The fronts are badly scorched - the paint rolled up like a scroll.

What now? - The burnt buildings will probably be replaced by a nice block in the Spring. What is to become of the Farmers' Store, time will tell. The directors and stockholders must determine.

(Middle of north side of Cross Street block from Aubree's to Depot Doo).

Ypsilanti Commercial, 20 April 1878

- At about half-past three o'clock on Saturday morning of last week, the alarm of fire was received at the engine house over the electric fire-alarm apparatus. The firemen responded promptly to headquarters and proceeded to the depot, whence came the alarm, ready for action. It awas found that the large frame dwelling-house of Mrs. Wm. Watts, on Cross street, directly opposite the Follett House, was in flames, and appranetly doomed to destruction, the fire having gained much headway, owing to a delay in giving the alarm. In close proximity to the burning structure were wooden buildings already smoking on account of the heat . . . The front part of the building was occupied by Mrs. Davis, and used as a millinery store, but her loss is slight, the goods being all saved . . .

(On the site of today's City Body Carstar).

Ypsilanti Commercial, 9 May 1885

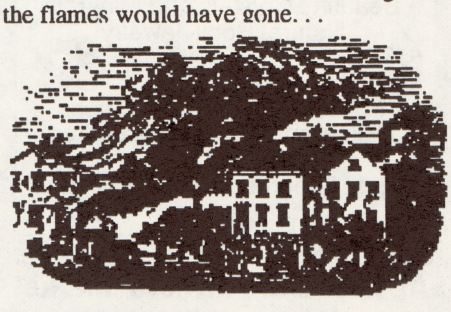
Monday night's blaze

At about five minutes to 11 o'clock last Monday night as E.A. Wilcox, porter at the Follett House, was showing some guests, who had arrived on a late train, to their rooms, he saw a fire issuing from the roof of Haskin's bakery. He immediately telephoned to the central station, and started across the street. F. Bucklin and Frank Oberst had already broken open the bakery door and were carrying out the contents of the store. The fire spread rapidly both east and west, and before it was under control four old landmarks, which have been used for various purposes for thirty to forty-five years, were consumed. The burned district extends from the building known as McCormick's meat marked (brick) now owned by Fairchild, Smith & Co., to L. L Forsyth's grocery (brick)...

(From the river to where EMU Center).

... The cause of the fire is not known. There was no fire in the builidng after five o'clock. Opinion differs as to whether it caught in the bakery or meat market, probably near the partition in the rear of the building. It has a look of incendiarism.

The fire, while it works harm to a few, will prove a permanent benefit to the city. Let those who have the money put up substantial brick buidngs. We note as worthy of mention that the fire went from brick to brick. Had it not been for the brick walls, no telling where the flames would have gone. . .



[Continued on page two]

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A Depot Town SAMPLER

Back to (the) Normal

Last month's EMU Homecoming Parade marshalled in Depot Town and signaled a hallmark in 'town and gown' relations. This month sees thousands of parents shuttle-bussed to the district for historical mini-tours of their kids' newly chosen home town on EMU Family Day. Next spring's Depot Town reunion will certainly see spin-offs from the depot's long relationship with the Normal School and those college kids are still lining up for jobs and housing down in the depot district.

EMU's continued commitment to the excellent program offered at their Depot Town Center certainly underlines it all and the school year seems to be including as much of the local color as any curriculum could possible enjoy. Why, even Duke Ellington is paying tribute to the phenomenon! (See the Lifespan Learning Programs on page three).

Other universities are offering seminars and symposia in 'hanging out,' and locals in this block are giggling at the fact that they've know how to do this for several generations. The only new twist is that you can now get college credit for it. Maybe all it took was for some of us to go to class, get our degrees, and then stay in the neighborhood long enough to be noted as 'experts' on something. Who knows? Maybe they'll be offering a Doctor of Depot Town next semester.

Is that a DDT? Could be!

Special thanks...

...to the sponsors posted on this page who stuck with *The Rag* through the very end. Some were even with us at the beginning - twenty years ago! Their loyal support has kept us in the black (ink) for a whole generation and there are not many neighborhood newsletters which can boast so heartily.

Two more issues and *The Depot Town Rag* will retire, upon which time the back issues may still be perused at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum Archives, the Burton Historical Collection, and the Eastern Michigan University Library.

If you ever thought of writing your memories of this block in these pages, now is the time to get them on paper as we plan the November and December issues.

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